



Child Care (Subsidy and Regulation)

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Purpose

The goal is to support low-income families to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency, to ensure that all regulated Iowa childcare meets minimum health and safety standards, and to promote high quality childcare.

Who

The childcare program provides assistance for:

- Children under age 13 (or up to age 19 if the child has special needs) of parents whose gross monthly income is below 145 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) or 200 percent of FPL if they have a child with a special need. Parents must be working 28 hours or more a week or in school full-time. To be eligible at 145 percent FPL, a family of four may earn no more than \$29,952 in gross annual income.
- Children of parents participating in PROMISE JOBS activities (required for most welfare recipients).
- Children needing protective childcare.

What

The department::

- Determines eligibility for subsidies and issues payments to providers. In SFY08, an average of 22,046 children were served each month (19,193 children of the working poor, 1,737 children of parents in PROMISE JOBS activities, and 1,116 children in need of protective care.)
- Licenses and regularly monitors 1,500 stand-alone childcare centers. Providers are held to rigorous standards. DHS consultants make unannounced visits annually.
- Registers 5,500 homes that provide childcare for at least six children at any one time, including children of the providers. Record checks and free training are provided to registered providers, but there is no periodic DHS oversight after a home is registered. There are an additional 4,400 unregulated (fewer than six children served) in-home providers serving children who are eligible for childcare assistance.
- Contracts for the statewide Child Care Resource and Referral system (http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhs2005/dhs_homepage/reports_pubs/results_based/childcare.html) that helps parents find childcare, providers training and technical assistance, and helps communities assess needs for childcare.
- Operates a Quality Rating System that helps providers improve their quality and gives parents comparative information to use in selecting a provider. Providers must be either licensed or registered to participate. Participation is voluntary. Achievement bonuses help offset the cost of participating. <http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/iqrs/>
- Contracts with the Department of Public Health ("Healthy Child Care Iowa") to improve health and safety in child care settings.

How are We Doing?

- A steadily rising number of childcare providers (as of August, 388 centers and 765 homes) have received ratings in the new (spring of 2006) Quality Rating System. Fifteen centers and 29 homes had received the highest rating.
- Legislation in 2007 required the department to pay provider childcare claims within 10 business days of receipt of a correct claim. Virtually all payments meet the standard.
- A phased rollout is planned beginning in late calendar 2008 enabling providers to file claims online, and enabling families to apply for subsidized childcare online.